

# Attending Fairs: Safeguarding Your Health and Nebraska's Livestock Industry

Rosie Nold, Extension Youth Animal Science Specialist, and David R. Smith, Extension Dairy/Beef Veterinarian

Simple sanitary practices when visiting areas where livestock is exhibited can protect the health of people and animals.

## What is the concern?

Because fairs, livestock expositions and petting zoos are such an enjoyable activity for many people, it is important to keep these events as open and accessible as possible. However, it is equally important that visitors to these events understand that they play an important role in preventing the spread of diseases.

In 2001, an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in the United Kingdom (U.K.) led to the slaughter of more than 6 million animals and caused economic losses of approximately \$13.5 billion to the U.K. The outcome of this outbreak is a reminder of the serious consequences of livestock diseases. Foot-and-mouth cannot be transmitted from animals to humans; however, some diseases can affect both humans and animals.

Some animal diseases do not present any direct risks to humans; however human contact can help spread diseases to other livestock. Livestock disease outbreaks could be economically devastating to a state like Nebraska, which derives a large portion of its income from the livestock industry.

It is important to use some simple sanitary practices when visiting places where livestock are housed or are being exhibited to protect your health and the health of the animals. These precautions are quite simple and are no different than what should be done to prevent the spread of colds or flu among people.

## Precautions that Visitors Should Take

Following these simple guidelines should help to prevent human illness and lessen the chance of animal to animal spread of disease:

- Do not touch or pet animals, except at designated petting exhibits
- Wash your hands with water and soap after any direct contact with animals
- Supervise children younger than 5 years during hand washing and petting to make sure they don't put their hands or other objects into their mouth
- Avoid eating in animal exhibit areas
- Do not feed human food to animals

**This publication has been peer reviewed.**

UNL Extension publications are available online at <http://extension.unl.edu/publications>

**Index: Animal Diseases**  
**General Livestock**  
 Issued February 2007